

VIRGINIA'S BANDIT

ELSIE SINGMASTER

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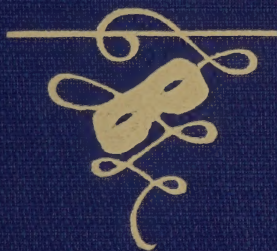
By Elsie Singmaster

IF the Gettysburg country had not already been made famous by the Battle, Miss Singmaster's stories would have made it so.

Unlike Emmeline and the heroine of "Sewing Susie," Virginia had nothing to do with the memorable struggle between the Southern and the Northern Armies. Virginia is a girl of the Gettysburg of 1928, her modern independence soundly built on the foundation of character and intelligence that her pioneer forefathers — and foremothers — laid down.

The story of her adventure is ingenious, thrilling, and — at times — very funny. No one equals Miss Singmaster in amusing portrayal of the Pennsylvania types and in the humorous drawing of scenes and situations.

VIRGINIA'S BANDIT



ELSIE
SINGMASTER

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'THE SAFE-CRACKER, HE GOT IT PRETTY BAD' (page 36)

VIRGINIA'S BANDIT

BY

ELSIE SINGMASTER

AUTHOR OF 'WHEN SARAH SAVED THE DAY,'
'EMMELINE,' 'SEWING SUSIE,' ETC.

With Illustrations



Boston and New York

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

The Riverside Press Cambridge

1929

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The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE · MASSACHUSETTS
PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

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Drawn by D. S. WENDELL

VIRGINIA'S BANDIT



CHAPTER I

MRS. MCINTYRE UNWILLINGLY LEAVES HOME

‘WERGIE!’

Walking through the dining-room, Virginia McIntyre stopped short, as if commanded by an imperative voice. She turned a bit awkwardly, as though she could not easily manage her tall frame. She was sixteen years old and growing rapidly — her father told her, ‘an inch a day.’ Her eyes were blue; her hair was brown. Her general appearance was slightly old-fashioned, and her expression was that of one to whom speech is difficult. She had graduated in June from the Gettysburg High School, and in September she expected to enter Gettysburg College. Her tastes were those of a country girl, and she was more interested in books than in moving pictures.

Now she was smiling, and her face was no

longer grave but bright; indeed she scarcely seemed to be the same Virginia. What she had heard was not actually a voice calling her; it was the telephone bell. It was practically a voice, however; for at the other end of the line was undoubtedly Mrs. Newhard and 'Wergie' was what Mrs. Newhard would say. She was a Pennsylvania German who still retained many Pennsylvania German idioms and pronunciations. Large, somewhat crippled by rheumatism, and seldom able to leave home, she depended upon the telephone for all her entertainment, and with her inordinate curiosity she was a nuisance to those of her neighbors who would listen to her idle remarks and queries. Virginia was one of the few who answered her politely and with the detail which she expected.

Patient though she was, Virginia decided that for the present Mrs. Newhard must wait. Her mother and father were sitting in the car at the gate while she fetched her mother's scarf which she now had in her hand. Mrs. McIntyre was about to take the Gettysburg-McConnellsburg bus in order to visit her

sister who was ill, and it was time for her to start. On the other hand, the message might not be from Mrs. Newhard, but from some one else and her father might wish to hear it before he left the house.

‘Yes?’

‘Wergie!’ Alas, her first thought had been best!

‘How is it by you this nice afternoon?’

Virginia could see in imagination Mrs. Newhard’s broad and smiling face — she knew that Mrs. Newhard had nothing whatever to say and that she would consume an enormous time in saying it. She must ask to be excused, even though Mrs. Newhard would expect her to explain.

‘Fine.’

‘How’s your Mom?’

‘Fine.’

‘And your Pop?’

‘Fine.’

‘And all else?’

There was no one else, Mrs. Newhard was merely filling in time. Fortunately the automobile horn sounded a loud blast.

'I must go,' announced Virginia. 'There's some one blowing a horn at the gate.'

'Who do you think ——'

Virginia hung up the receiver. Polite to Mrs. Newhard as she always was, she could not ignore her father's summons.

She ran through the living-room and the hall out to the front porch, and raced down the path. Her mother sat beside her father on the front seat of the car, a large woman with dark hair and snapping black eyes, who possessed inexhaustible physical energy and the most positive of principles. For her there was no confusion between right and wrong; a course of action was admirable and desirable, or it was undesirable and hateful. She would be an impartial judge, but a very stern judge.

McIntyre was tall and lean and blue-eyed, a Scotchman with a Scotchman's rugged features. Fond of his home, and devoted to reading, he went away only when business required. Physically and mentally Virginia resembled him, and she had also inherited his tender heart.

‘Now, Virginia,’ began Mrs. McIntyre. Like Mrs. Newhard, Mrs. McIntyre belonged to Pennsylvania German stock, but superior intelligence and association with her Scotch husband had modified and improved her Pennsylvania German speech. She looked at her daughter with all the ardent affection which a mother can feel for an only child, and a child who has always been obedient and in every way a credit.

‘It certainly does grieve me to go,’ she went on. ‘But your father will be here and your cousin Nell will be here, and the only extra work is a little canning and preserving. Put up only the fruit which would otherwise spoil. You should have no trouble and a nice quiet time.’

Virginia caught her father’s eye; in it was a twinkle.

‘Shall I do the red raspberries?’ she asked soberly.

‘Yes.’

‘And the currants?’

‘If they are ripe, but be very sure they are ripe.’

'Shall I preserve any raspberries and currants together?'

'Yes.'

'Shall I use the cold-pack method for the canned raspberries?'

'Yes.' Mrs. McIntyre did not observe the twinkling eyes; with each question and answer, the furrow on her brow deepened. At last she leaned out and kissed her daughter once more. 'If you need me, telephone to McConnellsburg and have them send a messenger to Aunt Susie's at once and at my expense.'

'I will, Mother.'

McIntyre put his foot on the starter. He looked at Virginia again whimsically and said, 'So long!' and the car moved away. 'She's pretty well grown up, Mother. Through High School and five feet seven and still going some.'

'She's a mere child,' declared Mrs. McIntyre. 'A baby! Wouldn't you think she could decide those questions for herself?'

'She would in a minute if you weren't about. She knows what would happen if you

came home and she'd made the awful mistake of using the hot-pack instead of the cold-pack.'

Though Mrs. McIntyre had lived with her husband for twenty years, she always took his remarks literally. 'There's no such thing as a hot-pack,' she answered impatiently. 'She's an inexperienced child.'

'I don't see that you give her much chance to get experience.'

'I'm going away, am I not?' asked Mrs. McIntyre unhappily. 'I'm leaving everything to her. That's enough chance. I wish I weren't going, and I shall bring Susie back here to get well the first minute she's able to come. Meanwhile, I'll be uneasy all the time.'

'Now, Mother, that's absurd!'

Virginia watched her parents to the turn of the road, then looked about at the scene which she loved. The farm, which covered three hundred acres, lay in a shallow depression, like a vast saucer. Through the center ran a stream, and on the rim and extending downward in several places were stretches of woodland. All the land — fields

and pasture and woodland — had belonged to the McIntyres since they had emigrated from Scotland to America in the year 1800.

McIntyre had two separate businesses — he served a large part of Gettysburg with the finest of Jersey milk from cows which fed on the rich grass on the lowlands, and he sold the wool from sheep which pastured in the higher fields. He sold also hundreds of spring lambs whose departure and destination always saddened his daughter's heart. He intended to change the breed of his sheep; hitherto he had raised only medium stock; he was now investing in Shropshires for the sake of their finer wool. His spring lambs were all sold and many of the sheep also, and he was about to make a journey to Greene County to buy at least a hundred yearlings. As soon as Mrs. McIntyre returned from McConnellsburg, he would start, traveling on an express train, but making the return journey on a freight with his purchases.

Virginia stood still until she saw the car disappear; then she turned back to the house. The road in each direction ran over the rim

of the valley, so that as it passed the summit any vehicle, and even a tall pedestrian, was for an instant clearly outlined against the sky. It was not likely that another car would come that way for many hours, except her father's on the return journey. The road was a side road, used only by the McIntyres and those who came to see them.

Built of stone by one of the first McIntyres, and well taken care of, the house had stood through the storms of a hundred years, and bade fair to stand a hundred more. A porch had been built across the front and a wing added so that the kitchen might be enlarged; otherwise there had been no change except the painting of the woodwork, the fresh pointing of the stones, and once in a long time the laying of a new shingle roof.

Before entering the house, Virginia looked upward. She believed that, suddenly transported to the earth from the moon, or waking from a long illness, she could tell the season by the appearance of the sky. This was unmistakably the sky of midsummer, immeasurably high and vastly distant, clear except

for magnificent puffy clouds which added to its beauty, but had no significance as to any change in weather.

A little dizzy from her upward gaze, she stepped into the cool house. The hall ran straight through; on one side was the parlor and behind it the best spare bedroom; on the other a living-room and behind it the large kitchen. The McIntyres took their meals in kitchen or living-room according to the season. The parlor was not often used; the living-room, with its comfortable chairs, its books and papers, being more cheerful. The spare room was also closed most of the time, because all the family, and the guests as well, preferred upper rooms. At present, however, the great four-post bed was made up for Aunt Susie, who, being an invalid, might find the climbing of stairs difficult.

Through the kitchen window could be seen the large barn, and beyond the sheep-folds, and the dairy building where the milk was sterilized and bottled. Still beyond, and facing the road were two small stone houses. In the first lived Thomas Foltz and his wife who

attended to the milk, their eighteen-year-old son who drove the milk truck to Gettysburg, and two little children. The second house was the house of the shepherd. It was at present empty, but was soon to be occupied by James Kincaid, an expert who had been in McIntyre's employ six years earlier and who was expected daily. He had been engaged on purpose to care for the fine Shropshires and he was to be on the farm when they arrived.

The three older Foltzes were efficient, but they were suspicious and grasping and very much afraid of being underpaid or ill-treated. Foltz was also, like many cowardly men, cruel. He kept a sharp lookout for stray dogs on the pretense of protecting the sheep, and he killed the most innocent canine on sight. He had a powerful rifle and was an expert shot. He always hit the target at which he aimed, but he did not always kill, and several times he had wounded a stray dog and had left him to die in misery. For this McIntyre had severely reprimanded him and had threatened him with dismissal.

Virginia did not stop to look out of the window, but walked straight to the opposite side of the kitchen where, behind a door, hung an apron. It was a pretty apron, made of unbleached muslin with a border of bright blue, the color of her eyes, and very becoming. She was entirely lacking in vanity, and she did not glance into the mirror hung between two deeply embrasured windows at the side of the room. Her eyes fixed themselves instead upon the dinner table which was still uncleared. She set to work at once.

‘What does Mother think could happen to me?’ she inquired aloud. ‘I wish something would happen! It would be pleasant to have an adventure.’

Instantly, as if in answer, a bell rang.

‘But not exactly that kind!’ said Virginia, ruefully. Making a grimace she stepped toward the telephone.

‘Wergie!’ called a familiar voice. Again she saw the smiling face, the eager eyes.

‘Yes.’

‘Is it then you, Wergie?’

‘Yes.’

'I thought you'd call me!' The voice was filled with reproach.

'I was busy.'

'Is your Mom there?'

'She went for a ride.'

'Did your Pop take her?'

'Yes.'

'Didn't they take you along?'

'No, they didn't.'

'Well, well! I'd like to know why didn't they take you?'

'I have a book to read.'

'Mind me, you'll for sure work your brain too hard, Wergie!'

'No danger!'

'I'm too going for a ride.'

'I hope you'll have a good time.'

'I sank myself — that is, if they come. I sink' — sometimes Mrs. Newhard's *th*'s changed to *s*'s. 'I sink I have somesing to tell you.'

Taking advantage of a moment of silence while Mrs. Newhard searched her mind vainly for what she had to tell, Virginia hung up the receiver.

'I sink not,' she said with a gayety which would have astonished her mother. 'I really sink not.'

Returning to the table, she worked rapidly and deftly, her thoughts upon the book she was reading. Her English teacher suggested to her long lists of delightful books. This was the story of a patient Swedish farmer who through years of discouragement and effort produced a variety of wheat which was free from the blight of rust. Stories of this kind thrilled Virginia to the soul; their characters were real human beings, practical and useful, the sort which she knew. While she was reading she lived in a dream. She had no interest in sentimental romance or in adventure — the first she found uninteresting, and the second improbable.

As she finished the dishes, she heard the sound of a car and walked to the front door to look out. Her father was at the gate, and instead of driving on to the garage as she expected he stepped out of the car and came rapidly up the walk.

'Virginia, do you think you and your cousin

Nell could keep house here for a few days?’

‘Surely!’

‘I went into the telegraph office to wire Kincaid, and while I was there a message came for me from the broker in Pittsburgh saying that I must go out to Greene County this week if I’m to have a choice of the best stock. I thought this might happen, but I said nothing because I knew Mother would either stay at home and have no peace about Aunt Susie, or else go and have no peace about you with me away. Have you talked to Nellie?’

‘Not yet.’

‘Do that right away — no, first get ready to take me back to town.’

McIntyre entered the hall and ran up the stairs, two steps at a time, and Virginia fetched her hat and closed the back of the house. There was no reason for locking the house; every one in the neighborhood was honest, even the Foltzes who were so mean otherwise. She came out and sat on the porch, her book in her hand. Her father required no help; his small satchel had been packed for

several days, ready for this summons. He ran down the stairs as fast as he had run up.

'I'd better take the wheel,' said he. 'We've got to make time.' He stepped into the car and Virginia sat beside him. He started at a good speed. 'Kincaid will be here by the middle of the week. Do you remember him?'

'Perfectly,' answered Virginia. 'A short man with reddish hair, a round face and blue eyes. When he laughed, his nose turned up, and his eyes almost disappeared.'

'You've got him!'

'He told fairy stories,' went on Virginia. 'I suppose that's the reason I remember him so well. He used to let me help take care of the smallest lambs. Once he showed me how to bind up the leg of an injured sheep. I thought he was wonderful.'

'You'd better give him his meals at the house till he's settled. He's still a bachelor. I'll telegraph you when he's to come to Fairfield Station to meet me. Be sure he's on hand. I may have two hundred yearlings; if I buy for Thaxter, I may have three hundred.

Tell Kincaid to ride Lady and bring Luce for me.'

'Will Lady let him ride?'

'Lady will — she endures any man, however strange, who smells of sheep. Luce won't, but she'll travel alongside of Lady on a halter.'

'It's all very simple,' said Virginia.

Gettysburg came into view from the top of a hill. To the right was Big Round Top, surmounted by a tall observation tower, round which circled a number of buzzards which raised their young on the rocky slopes. There were other observation towers on thickly wooded lower ground. Above the town rose towers and cupolas, highest of all, that of the Seminary.

'It's going to be very warm,' prophesied McIntyre.

'The red raspberries and the peas and the currants will all be ripe,' Virginia reflected aloud. 'I'll have plenty to occupy me. I'd like to surprise Mother by having them all finished.'

'Did you telephone to Nell?'

'Not yet.'

'Do that as soon as you get home. Perhaps she can stay all day as well as at night, and help you. Don't overdo.'

'I won't.'

Gettysburg was not so attractive near at hand. Yesterday had been the Fourth of July, and the litter of many visitors had not yet been cleared up. There were still hundreds of tourists driving about the avenues and through the town. Many persons were crowding into the Harrisburg bus which was about to start, and McIntyre leaped from the car with a hasty good-bye and ran to get a seat.

Virginia waved to him as she turned to drive home. She thought of stopping at her uncle's and taking Nell along with her, but, if Nell did not arrive until dark, she would have time to find out whether the hero of her book succeeded finally in creating his rust-proof wheat. She was not afraid to stay alone, but that was not the question. She smiled a little as she remembered a certain expression of consternation, disapproval, and alarm

which sometimes appeared upon her mother's face.

'The minute I get home I'll call,' said she, as she drove along the pleasant road. 'The very minute.'

CHAPTER II

VIRGINIA HAS A VISITOR

VIRGINIA did not do as she intended and call her cousin the minute she reached home. First of all, she drove into the yard and put the car into the garage. The homestead had a very quiet look and the sky seemed higher than ever. Then she started toward the house intending to go directly to the telephone, but on the way she turned aside to enter the stable. Once a day she was accustomed to give a lump of sugar to each of the two tall thoroughbred Kentucky horses, Lady and Luce, on whom her father and his shepherd rode the range, and to the work-horses as well, and this pleasant custom she had neglected.

Opening the door leading into the entry which divided the stalls, she went in. The stable was dark and cool and full of the odors with which she had been familiar since she was born. She could see shining eyes turned

upon her, but, coming in from the bright light outside, little else.

‘Lady!’ said she. ‘Ho, Lady! Luce! Harry! Pete!’

Her voice sounded strangely to her ears, and the animals seemed to behave in a queer way. Usually Luce and Lady greeted her with loud whinnying, and even the stolid farm-horses uttered little grunting sounds. Lady and Luce whinnied, but they whinnied uneasily and on an unnaturally high key. She had a disturbing notion that some other sound had just ceased; that some living creature which did not belong there was in the barn and that it was holding its breath and waiting to see what she would do.

Entirely without fear, she approached the stalls of the two Kentucky horses. One nuzzled her warm nose against her neck, the other tried in vain to reach her. Their sensitive hides were quivering as though they were cold.

‘What’s the matter with you?’ she asked with playful roughness. ‘Old sillies, what’s the trouble?’

There answered a new sound, a low, agonized whimper, almost human in its quality. Following the sound with her eye, she could see at the far end of the entry a small dark huddled mass. Instantly she stepped back to the door and turned on the electric light. The mass was the body of a dog, a large and beautiful red setter. Examining him, she found that his foot had been crushed, apparently by a stone. She guessed that he had been hunting a rabbit, and had brought down part of the wall under which the rabbit had taken refuge.

'Why, you poor chap!' she exclaimed in distress. 'Come with me.'

Hopping painfully, he followed her across the yard to the porch. There she inspected his foot more carefully.

'Poor fellow!' said she. 'Poor fellow! Lie still where you are.'

Returning to the barn, she fetched a large bottle of antiseptic liniment, 'The Animals' Best Cure,' a name abbreviated by those who used it to 'A.B.C.' When the cork was removed, the strong odor of iodine filled the air. As she was pouring the liquid on the foot of

the suffering but patient and intelligent dog, Foltz came round the corner of the barn. He was an unattractive man, undersized as to height, but with shoulders which were abnormally broad. His thick dark beard, which he frequently allowed to grow for a week, made him look untidy and even vicious.

‘Why, what do you make?’ he inquired. Besides being unattractive and sometimes cruel, he was mannerless. His speech was like that of Mrs. Newhard, a sort of Pennsylvania English, to which he added American slang.

‘Here’s this poor dog,’ answered Virginia. ‘I guess he was after a rabbit, and a rock rolled on his foot.’

‘I’ll say!’ agreed Foltz. ‘Well, I’ve got a cure, a sure cure for such trouble.’

He stepped away, across the yard and round the barn toward his house, and in a few minutes reappeared. Looking up, Virginia saw with amazement that he carried the powerful rifle with which he shot not only strange dogs, but sometimes deer.

‘What are you going to do?’ she asked astonished.

'Shoot him,' explained Foltz lightly. 'Get him nice out of the way before the yearlings are on hand. It will save trouble to settle him now.' He spoke as though Virginia were a stupid child, and he her father.

'You'll do nothing of the kind!' she protested hotly. 'He'll get well. He's all right. Here's his tag, he's somebody's pet.'

'He's after sheep,' insisted Foltz angrily. 'It's now or later.'

'It's neither now nor later,' contradicted Virginia. 'How do you know that he's after sheep? I'm going to make a bed for him and take care of him till he can go home.'

Foltz was not one to give another person the last word. 'Then have it your way,' said he rudely, and strolled off, his gun on his shoulder.

Virginia watched him — he went toward the woods. Surely he did not intend to break the law and shoot on Sunday! She went to the stable to give the horses their treat, then to the front porch, where she sat down with her book. She thought of Nellie, but only to hope vaguely that she would not appear till



‘WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?’ SHE ASKED, ASTONISHED

the book was finished. She forgot entirely her mother's departure to Aunt Susie's and her father's call to Pittsburgh.

Roused with a start by the ring of the telephone, she sprang up. It was no longer merely twilight, it was almost night, but so intense had been her concentration that her eyes had been able to pierce the darkness and continue reading. The hero had bred the rustless wheat which was to bring prosperity to his neighbors, but he had not survived to realize his success. With tears in her half-blinded eyes she stumbled to the telephone.

'Wergie!' said a familiar voice.

'Yes, Mrs. Newhard.'

'Well, I was riding.' Through stone walls and two miles of country Virginia could see Mrs. Newhard at her telephone. She would sit there the rest of the evening, calling now one person, now another.

'You were!'

'I were, and now I'm nice back, Wergie.' Again Mrs. Newhard searched her brain for something to say. 'Your uncle's house is all dark.'

'It is?'

'Yes, I can see good from where I am. I believe they went off. I believe they went all afternoon off.'

'Is that so?' Virginia was disturbed — what if Nell could not come?

'Wergie?' Mrs. Newhard paused, but not long enough for Virginia to hang up the receiver.

'Yes.'

'Are you yet there?'

'I am,' answered Virginia. 'But I think some one else wants the line.'

'That could easy be,' chuckled Mrs. Newhard. 'Well, good-bye for the present.'

Virginia stood with the receiver in her hand. She had given her uncle's number, but there was no answer. She could hear a lifted receiver, she could hear the voice of Mrs. Newhard.

'Whoever you are, if you're calling John McIntyre, he went after dinner off, and all his family.'

Virginia hung up the receiver. She did not wish Mrs. Newhard to extract from her the

fact that she was alone. She looked about the kitchen. She was tired and sleepy; it was late and she must get up at five o'clock. She felt no fear, and it would be absurd to bring Nell over at this hour. She placed a pan of water where the dog could reach it, she locked the house and went upstairs to her bedroom above the spare room. As she entered the room, the telephone rang again and she descended the stairs. It could not be Mrs. Newhard at this hour! Perhaps Nell was calling her and it was not too late for her to come over. But it was Mrs. Newhard once more.

'Say, Wergie!'

'Yes.'

'You're not in bed, then?'

'No,' answered Virginia, her tone a little sharp. 'I'm here at the 'phone.'

'I know now what I wanted to tell you.'

'You do?'

'Yes. This is it — I have a new 'phone. It's such a loose 'phone on a string. I can sit nice in my rocking-chair. I am sitting there now.'

'I wish I had one of those,' said Virginia.

'Unfortunately I have to stand.'

'But you are young,' said Mrs Newhard complacently. 'That is different. Good-night.'

Again Virginia climbed the steps.

'First of all, the raspberries,' she said sleepily.

She made her preparations for bed and lay down. She could see dimly under the stars the rim of low hills to the east which interposed between her and a view of Gettysburg. It would be noisy in town with traffic all night long, but here it was blessedly quiet and peaceful. Closing her eyes, she was in a second fast asleep.

CHAPTER III

A SECOND VISITOR ARRIVES

VIRGINIA woke at five o'clock on Monday morning. The sun had risen almost a half-hour before, and its level and golden rays shone through her room. She had for a moment a feeling of strangeness, then slowly she recalled the events of the day before.

'It's morning,' she said aloud. 'And nothing has happened, except that I'm already like the old ladies who live alone — I talk to myself.'

Having dressed, she walked through the upper floor, closing shutters so as to prevent the escape of the pleasant morning freshness. In the lower floor she opened the windows and shutters to let the morning freshness in. When she had had breakfast, she closed them. She went into the spare room and turned back the coverlet of the old four-post bed — yes, her mother had made it up, sheets, blanket, and all, ready for Aunt Susie.

She was bringing from the cellar small baskets and large for the raspberries when the telephone rang. Tempted not to answer, she stood hesitating — there was no time on this busy morning to talk to Mrs. Newhard, who, seated comfortably in her rocking-chair, was prepared to annoy her neighbors. The bell rang again; she put down her basket and went to answer.

‘Virginia,’ said a voice.

‘Hello!’ Virginia saw in imagination stout and pleasant Nell at the other end of the line. Staying alone had done her no harm, but it was pleasant to feel that henceforth she would have company.

‘Busy?’ asked Nell.

‘Not so very.’

‘Well, I am. I have Grace’s four children here.’

‘How does that happen?’

‘We went over there yesterday afternoon and found poor Grace sick — worn out, I guess. So Mother stayed and I brought the children home. They’re dear children, but what mischief they don’t think of never has

been thought of in this world. And every one of them has a bad cold. Did you hear anything from your Aunt Susie?’

‘Yes,’ said Virginia. ‘She’s no worse.’

‘I haven’t much time to talk.’

‘I should think not! I can hear your menagerie.’

‘I’ll wager you can! Good-bye.’

Virginia slowly hung up the receiver. Nell did not suspect that she was alone, and there was no reason why she should be told. She was not alone—the Foltz family were close at hand, and whatever could be said against them they could be depended upon if she were in danger. And she had a dog! She remembered the red setter and went out to the back porch. He was in his place on the pile of old burlap she had placed for him. He tried to stand on his foot, but did not succeed, and lay down with a moan. She carried him fresh water and a plate of meat and potatoes and he wagged his tail gratefully. In a day or two he would probably hobble off to his home.

The garden was delightful at this early hour; the dew lay thickly on plants and earth,

she could smell mint and sage and thyme. There was a large crop of red raspberries — she began to estimate the number of jars and glasses she could fill. The picking of the berries required little effort of the mind, and her thoughts wandered to other matters. She reviewed from the beginning the story which she had finished. With her Commencement money she had ordered books and she was expecting them daily. The rural deliverer was due at eight o'clock; by that time she would have finished her picking and be in the kitchen. As soon as she heard his horn, she would run down to the box.

She heard the familiar sounds of the farm without being aware of them, though she would immediately have missed them if they had ceased. Young Foltz started away with the truck. He was a sullen boy whom she did not admire and seldom saw, but, like his father, he did his work well. She could hear Foltz, Senior, shouting to his horses in the field where he was cultivating corn. This was magnificent weather for ripening corn, clear, dry, and hot. She heard the whirr of a single

locust, then another, then they sang on every side. The clock in the kitchen struck eight, and at this instant she picked the last ripe berry.

She sterilized her jars and walked to the door and looked for the postman; she packed her berries and looked for him again; she placed the jars in boilers on the oil-stove, and went once more to the front door to look down the road. It was nine o'clock, but still there was no sign of his car.

Returning to the garden, she began to gather the currants. This was rapid work, even though she interrupted it frequently to look round the corner of the house toward the gate. When the clock struck ten, she ran down to the letter-box. There was nothing there; either the postman did not have even the daily paper, or else he had not yet arrived. As she returned through the house, the telephone rang.

"Yes?" said she.

'Wergie!'

'Yes?'

'Are you folks so busy you can't answer the

'phone?' Mrs. Newhard was plainly irritated.
'What are you then doing?'

'Picking raspberries and currants, and preserving.'

'Your Mom oughtn't to be out in this hot sun.'

'She isn't,' answered Virginia briefly.

'Say, was the postman yet this morning at your house?'

'No, he wasn't.'

'Do you know why he wasn't?'

'Perhaps he hadn't anything for us.'

'That's so. Listen, Wergie' — Mrs. Newhard was trying to find something to say. Virginia stood silent.

'Ach, she's gone!' muttered Mrs. Newhard.

Slyly Virginia hung up the receiver. She had not stepped away before the telephone rang again, and yet again.

'Virginia!' This was another neighbor.
'Has the postman come to your box?'

'No,' answered Virginia. 'He hasn't.'

'What ails him? Where is he?'

'I haven't an idea. I guess he'll be along by and by.'

'Let us hope.' The neighbor was, like Virginia, busy; she hung up the receiver with a little slam.

Virginia began to stem currants. Fifteen minutes passed — the telephone rang — it was another neighbor to inquire; another fifteen — it rang again.

'Wergie!' called Mrs. Newhard. 'He's now on the way! He passed by here going fast. He didn't stop by me. I guess he had nothing for me. He'll soon be by you.'

'Thank you, Mrs. Newhard.'

Virginia walked down to the letter-box at the gate. The postman was there in his car extracting the McIntyre mail from his bag.

'Did you have an accident?' she inquired.

'Worse than that!' he answered excitedly, handing out a few letters and a package of books. 'Worse than that, Virginia! We had safe-crackers in the post-office last night. They came with a kind of torch that cuts metal and they cut the outside door out of the vault, then they blew off a charge of nitroglycerine and they damaged things something fierce. They were professionals, but

they didn't get much, and one got shot. The neighbors heard the explosion and called the police quietly and they charged the robbers. They got one robber; they heard him scream. And the chief of police is shot.'

'Not killed!'

'No, but shot in the arm. The safe-cracker, he got it pretty bad, they think. He ran down past the jail and out over Culp's Hill. No doubt he had confederates, but they got separated and some got away in an automobile. But he didn't, and he's laying out somewheres. It was him that shot the chief. It' — the postman was shouting above the sound of his engine, he now put on more power and shouted still more loudly. 'It will go pretty hard with him if he gets caught! He won't see daylight, believe me, till he's old and gray-headed!'

Virginia looked up at the cloudless sky, round at the rim of woods. 'How terrible!'

'It sure is!'

'Did they get a good look at him?'

'No, he had a mask on. He wasn't a very tall fellow, that's all they know. I guess you

don't wonder I'm late! I didn't get started anywhere near on time, and every woman along the line has had to hear the whole story. Hello, Foltz!'

Foltz came round the corner of the barn. The voices of Virginia and the postman had carried to the field where he was working and he had promptly tied his horses to the fence. Foltz was nothing if not curious.

'Come here!' shouted the postman. 'I got something to tell you!'

Carrying the mail, Virginia walked toward the house. 'The men are just as much excited as the women, I guess,' said she. She looked back over her shoulder — Foltz was standing with his mouth open, his eyes bulging. The postman imitated a man holding a revolver. Presently Foltz followed her to the kitchen.

'I tell you I'd like a bead on him!' said he.

'I can't see that it would help matters to shoot him!' said Virginia.

'Would you let him get off free?' sneered Foltz. 'Mark my words, it'll go pretty hard with him!'

Foltz walked rapidly to his house. Virginia

laid the letters on her father's desk, and her parcel on the kitchen table. The wounded dog wagged his tail and looked up at her. Again he tried standing on his foot and again gave it up. His eyes had no longer an expression of agony; touching gratitude had taken its place. She could hear the voice of Foltz shouting out the story to his wife. Presently he stabled the horses and got out his car — evidently he was going to town to hear more. The telephone rang, she answered it; Nell had taken time from her multitudinous duties to call.

‘Isn't it shocking!’

‘Indeed, it is!’

‘I hope they catch the bandit and hang him!’

‘Perhaps he got into bad company and was misled.’

‘Perhaps he was.’ Nell spoke doubtfully, as though she preferred to believe in the congenital perversity of the bandit. ‘If I hear anything, I'll let you know.’

‘Please do.’

The telephone rang once more — certain that it was Mrs. Newhard, Virginia did not

answer. It rang again, again; then clearly Mrs. Newhard became discouraged.

It was one o'clock; Virginia remembered that she must eat — that was why she felt so feeble! She prepared a sandwich and a cup of coffee and ate without tasting. Soon it was two o'clock, then three. She finished the last of her preserving and bathed and changed her dress; then she sat down in a rocking-chair in the cool living-room and opened her books. Here was 'Far from the Madding Crowd,' here was 'The Woodlanders,' both stories of the country. Here were two volumes of biography, that of Charlotte Brontë, and that of Sir Walter Scott — they would give her, Miss Jayne said, what she called a working knowledge of nineteenth-century England. She opened the biography of Charlotte Brontë, but she could not fix her mind upon the words. She opened one of the novels; it was equally hard to read. Hearing Foltz return, she crossed the yard to the barn and walked on to his house.

Mrs. Foltz sat on the step, looking up at her husband, a small child on each side. She

was a woman of enormous size; when her Mother Hubbard wrapper was girdled by an apron, she seemed to have some sort of human figure, but when her apron was loosely tied or absent, she looked like a circus tent moving about. It was she who now listened open-mouthed while Foltz stood beside her, talking in a loud voice and gesticulating.

‘A thousand dollars reward!’ he cried. ‘They say, too, it’ll be raised yet higher! If he’d only come this way, I’d sure caught him. I’d marched him in, dead or alive! Bet your life on that! But he went the other way. Just my luck! He’s safe in Maryland now, hid in the mountains or in Baltimore City, that’s where he is. The police’ll never get him.’

‘That would be an easy way to earn a thousand dollars,’ sighed Mrs. Foltz. ‘Some people have all the luck. I’ll bet him that gets it won’t need it.’

Virginia walked back to the house. It was almost evening; she would prepare supper slowly, so as to take up some of this unending day. It was queer that Mrs. Newhard had as

yet heard nothing, and amusing, too. When she did hear, no one else would be able to use the telephone for a long time. Sometimes the situation cured itself, because people grew impatient and ruthlessly rattled their receivers in Mrs. Newhard's ear.

Virginia determined that at dark she would get into the car and drive over to Nell's to spend the night. She had no fear of staying alone, but it was the sensible thing to do. Again she recalled uneasily the look of disapproval with which her mother regarded any sign of independence on her part.

She finished her supper and was washing the few dishes when she heard a step on the porch. She was startled, then annoyed at herself, as she realized that it was Foltz whose step was always soft and sly. The friendly dog, lying in the corner, thumped the porch with his tail.

'Dog still here?' Foltz sniffed the air. 'Bet you wasted a lot of good A.B.C.! If he stays round he'll get the gun anyhow. Say'—Foltz leaned his shoulder against the door-frame. 'Do you remember them Lemurs out West?' 'No.'

'They was train-robbers, they held up a Pennsylvania mail train. The police hunted 'em down with bloodhounds. They got 'em, too! And do you remember the Killian brothers in Pittsburgh? They was the bold chaps, but they got theirs! The Killians, they broke into a rich man's house, and ——'

Virginia hung up the dishpan with a clatter. 'I don't like to let my mind dwell on such things.'

'Afraid?' Foltz laughed. 'You needn't be afraid. Such people only go after big game. Ain't your cousin come yet?'

Virginia stepped across to the telephone, hoping that Foltz would take the hint and go. She meant to tell Nell that she would drive over — how astonished Nell would be to hear that her mother and father were away and that she had spent the night alone!

'If I catch sight of him, I know what I'll do,' went on Foltz. 'I'll press that long friend of mine against his back, and march him off, double-quick. Let him try to run! It would be dead or alive, you can bet! The reward's the same, I should worry!'

With this vindictive harangue, Foltz departed. Virginia dressed the setter's foot; then, lifting the receiver, gave Nell's number, and instantly heard a voice. 'Wergie!'

'Yes.'

'I just called you, Wergie. I have some news, if you don't! Last night the post-office was robbed, Wergie. The men got in a window and cut open the vault. They had a light of some kind and they burned it open. They were professionals. Is it not wonderful?'

'Yes,' agreed Virginia.

'That isn't the half, or yet the quarter! Listen once!'

Mrs. Newhard went on and on. Foltz appeared at the door again, then with a remark highly uncomplimentary to Mrs. Newhard, he stepped across the porch, hissing meanly at the setter as he passed.

'Well, the policeman, he seen them and he aimed his gun, and ——'

Virginia shifted wearily from one foot to the other.

'Then the robber, he went running fast out the street — no, first he shot back, then he went running out the street. Then ——'

The light grew more dim, the crickets chirped frantically, from the woods echoed the cry of a whip-poor-will.

'Mrs. Newhard,' began Virginia politely, 'I'm sorry ——'

'I want this line!' shouted some one furiously.

'Yes, well,' agreed Mrs. Newhard cheerfully. 'I'll call you soon back, Wergie. Good-bye till then.'

'You'll not call me back either,' contradicted Virginia to herself. She looked round into the dark rooms. 'I shall be gone. The house will be locked, and I shall be gone.'

She felt her way to the nearest window, lowered it and locked it, then moved to another.

'I shall be gone,' said she again aloud.

The dog's tail thumped the floor. A dark figure filled the doorway.

'I'm going away, Foltz,' said she. 'I'm going over to my uncle's to spend the night.' There was no response. 'Why don't you answer me?' she cried sharply.

There was still no answer. The dark figure

swayed, tottered, plunged forward, fell with a crash, and lay at full length on the floor.

‘In the name of sense!’ cried Virginia, using her mother’s pet expression. ‘Who are you? What ails you?’

Still there was no answer. She backed across the room until she could press the electric switch. On the floor lay a man of medium height and slender frame, hatless, black-haired, black-bearded, soiled with earth. The setter began to whine; it was as though the sound came from the lips of the prostrate creature.

‘Who are you?’ asked Virginia in a louder tone, but still the stranger lay motionless and dumb.

CHAPTER IV

VIRGINIA APPLIES FIRST AID

VIRGINIA felt for a few moments no fright, only astonishment and compassion. Who could this poor soul be? She walked across the room and looked down at the prone figure, as she had looked at the setter with the crippled foot.

She guessed the stranger to be forty years old, at least, though on account of the short stubble of dark beard it was difficult to guess his age. He lay in the limpness of complete unconsciousness, one arm flung out at right angles to his body, the other lying against his side. Again the dog whined, again the sound seemed to proceed from the lips of the prostrate man. The whine was not that of recognition, it was merely an expression of sympathy, as of one suffering creature for another.

‘What’s the matter with you?’ asked Virginia once more, and still received no answer.



‘WHAT’S THE MATTER WITH YOU?’ ASKED VIRGINIA
ONCE MORE, AND STILL RECEIVED NO ANSWER

The telephone rang, and rang again; she did not stir from where she stood. From the distance sounded the voice of Foltz; it came nearer. He was shouting; it was probable that, as he moved round at his work, he was telling new stories of the Lemur brothers and the Killians and repeating his blood-thirsty threats. Virginia remembered what he had said. 'If I catch sight of him, I know what I'll do! I'll press this friend of mine against his back and march him off, double-quick! Let him try to run, it will be dead or alive, you can bet! The reward's the same.'

The sound of Foltz's voice grew faint; without any deliberate intention she had already moved toward the door as though to close it. She stopped halfway, and stood with her clenched fist pressed against her lips. A new idea flashed into her mind and her eyes stared wildly at the stranger. They said that the bandit who was shot had gone south, but he might have turned back! She saw that across the stranger's pale cheek was a stain of blood, and the fingers of his right hand were scarlet, as though they had been dipped in blood.

She took another step toward the door, then again she stood still.

'I can't keep him here when I'm all by myself!' said she.

She saw the black, vindictive eyes of Foltz; she saw in imagination another sight. In Gettysburg was a station of the constabulary and she had watched a pair of officers arrest a fleeing bootlegger. He was a blustering, drunken creature and their powerful strength was none too much for their task. She had sympathized with them, but this was a different case; this man was helpless and unconscious. She took still another step and closed the door.

'I can't let Foltz shoot him in the back!' she thought wildly.

Again the telephone rang — an extra operator had been put on to receive the many calls. Absent-mindedly she went to answer.

'Well, Wergie.'

'Y-yes,' she said vaguely.

'Don't you know me?'

'Yes, I know you.' For an instant she had failed to recognize even the oft-heard voice

of Mrs. Newhard. It seemed an immeasurable time since she had talked to Mrs. Newhard.

‘Well, I’m back again. I had a hard time. It gives a great many selfish people in the world. So the robber went running ——’

Virginia turned so that she might watch the man on the floor. He did not move, but lay as one who had at last found a haven. At any minute the door might open and Foltz might enter. When her mother was at home he knocked, but he treated her with no such formality. Her quick imagination heard his shout. He would not run for his rifle; he would yell to his wife to bring it to him. If the injured man could be moved into another room into which Foltz would not enter, then she might have time to think what she should do.

‘And that police, he was sure quick on the trigger, Wergie!’ said Mrs. Newhard.

In Virginia’s ear sounded a sharp click, oft-repeated.

‘Some one wants the line, Mrs. Newhard.’

‘No less than four people want the line,’ declared an anonymous voice angrily. ‘She

spoke the truth when she said there were selfish people in the world.'

'All right! All right!' answered Mrs. Newhard pleasantly. 'Wergie, I'll call you back!'

The receiver dropped from Virginia's hand and she found the hook with difficulty. She stepped to the side of the stranger.

'Are you in pain?'

There was no answer.

'You can't get up, can you?'

There was still no answer, and she looked stupidly about. The door into the hall was open; she crossed and opened the door into the spare-room. There met her a pleasant, cool, slightly damp air. She returned again to the kitchen. She had never seen a sick man; or, indeed, sickness of any sort except in animals. This creature was like a newborn lamb, limp and lifeless. At last he opened his eyes — they were blue and slightly glazed.

'What has happened to you?' inquired Virginia again.

The glazed eyes looked puzzled. Again sounded the voice of Foltz from the distance.

The stranger spoke two words — ‘Rest,’ he muttered. ‘Sleep.’

‘There’s a bed across the hall,’ said Virginia. She had not thought of suggesting the bed; she had thought only of his creeping in to lie on the floor and there be out of sight of Foltz.

‘A bed?’ repeated the man as though she offered him entrance to heaven. ‘Not a bed!’

‘Yes, a bed,’ said Virginia. ‘Can you creep?’

‘Creep?’ He repeated the word as though thus he might hope to understand it. ‘Creep?’

‘Yes, creep!’ Virginia’s voice, cracked into sharpness, pierced his dull brain. He tried to turn over on his side and at last succeeded.

‘Creep?’ said he. As he struggled to his knees, a dark drop ran down his wrist to his hand.

Virginia talked to him as she had talked to the setter. ‘Come, now, this way! A little farther! Only a little farther! — Perhaps it will kill him!’ she said to herself in agony.

The stranger crept out the door, a dim light from the kitchen illuminating his way. In the

middle of the hall he paused and remained stationary on hands and knees.

'You must keep on,' insisted Virginia. 'It's only a little farther.'

He crept on, uttering a moan with each motion of his body.

'This way,' directed Virginia. 'Here's the bed.'

Seizing the edge of the mattress, he tried to lift himself up. Failing, he looked at Virginia as a child might look at an elder who bids him accomplish an impossible task.

He made another frantic effort — however wild had been his life, he seemed to know the uses of a bed. By a powerful effort he raised himself, but he did not secure a good hold and was about to slip back. Virginia took him by the shoulders and exerting her full strength pressed against him. Succeeding in lifting his legs, he lay motionless.

'Now he's dead!' said Virginia in anguish.

She looked about the room — the shades were drawn, the shutters were closed. She pressed the electric button — no illumination here would be visible without. She

turned out the light in the kitchen. Hearing her move about, the dog whined woefully, but she paid no heed. Her attention was held not by a sound, but by an odor, the heavy acrid smell of A.B.C. with which the air was still filled. The man had a wound in his shoulder — that was evident; and if she let him stay even for an hour she must give him some attention, at least she must learn whether his wound was serious. The thought of blood did not make her faint; she had dressed the injured leg of the dog without a tremor and long ago she had helped Kincaid. If only good Kincaid were here! She could hear his ‘Now, little leddy!’

With Virginia action invariably followed quickly upon intention. She walked back into the spare-room and stood looking at the stranger. His coat was open and his khaki shirt showed no stain of blood, but there was an unnatural protuberance near the shoulder. While she stared, he moved uneasily, and with an unsteady hand she pulled back his shirt. On the white skin was a blue lump surrounded by angry inflammation. In his fury against a

stray dog, Foltz had once shot a sheep, and her father had shaved the wool and revealed just such a swelling.

'A bullet!' said she, overwhelmed by a feeling of nausea. 'That's where a fleeing man would have been struck!'

As if her scrutiny roused him, the stranger turned, groaning, upon his face. Echoing his groan as though she herself suffered pain, she laid her hand on the back of his dark coat — it was not wet, but stiff and sticky to the touch. She looked over her shoulder toward the kitchen, then turned and went into the kitchen. 'I hope I don't find anything!' said she foolishly. 'I pray I don't find anything!'

She came back with a sharp knife and began to cut the thick cloth.

'Oh, my!' she cried. 'Oh, dear!'

The bullet had entered high on the shoulder and the hemorrhage had been severe. It was exactly the sort of wound which would be given to a fleeing man.

'Why did you do it?' she asked hysterically. 'Don't you know the wicked are found out? I'll have to dress this wound!' She uttered a

sort of moan. 'I hope there's still some hot water in the tank.'

Bathed with warm water, the wound looked less unsightly, but no less dreadful and dangerous.

'I can soak it with A.B.C.' She poured out the dark liniment; it burned the raw flesh cruelly and the stranger shrank from her with a cry. 'It will soon be done,' she assured him in a whisper. 'Now you must turn over.'

Not because he heard her, but because he wished to escape from her, he turned upon his back; then, with another groan, upon his side.

'That's right,' said she. She looked again at the hard swelling. 'Dad touched the skin with the tip of his knife, then the bullet popped out. If I do it, I must do it quickly! Quickly!' She touched the sharp blade to the swelling — instantly the bullet appeared, a small, dark, encrusted object. It sprang out as though it were propelled, and rolled off the bed to the floor. Virginia's foot struck it and it flew under the long valance. She lifted the liniment again and poured out a liberal flood. 'There!' said she. 'There!' as one might to a

child. She laid a soft towel between flesh and clothing.

'He ought to have his clothes taken off, but I can't! I can't!'

Sinking into the rocking-chair, she regarded her patient.

'Those desperadoes go armed,' Foltz had declared. 'Armed to the teeth, and anybody who gets in their way is just as good as dead.'

She stepped back to the side of the bed and laid her hand upon the stranger's pockets. They seemed to contain but one object of any size, this a paper-wrapped parcel in the pocket which was uppermost. She drew it out — it was a sandwich such as one would buy from a farmer — thick, with an abundance of butter and a good cut of meat.

Her eyes fell upon the stranger's well-worn brown shoes — they were odd in shape, as though they had been made by hand, and the soles were enormously thick. It was uncomfortable to sleep with one's shoes on, but if the poor man had to jump up and run for his life, which was not unlikely, he would need them.

She carried the sandwich to the kitchen and

sat down on the settle, holding it in her hand. She could hear no sound except the cry of the whip-poor-will from the woods near to the house. She looked at the clock — the hands pointed to ten. She wished that she might turn out the light and open the window, but she was afraid — Foltz might be walking about. At half-past ten she still sat holding the sandwich. She thought longingly of her bed, of a white gown against her tired body, of smooth sheets, of a soft pillow beneath her cheek.

‘I’ll have to lock him in,’ said she. ‘If he stays, that’s what I’ll do. But I’m dreaming! This is all a dream. I shall wake presently and be in my bed.’

CHAPTER V

FOLTZ HEARS A VOICE

ON Tuesday morning, Virginia did not wake as she intended with the first gray light of dawn. The sun was high in the clear sky before she opened her unwilling eyes and lay looking about her. She was not in her own bed, and there was not the touch of a smooth nightgown and sheets on her body, and a soft pillow under her cheek. She lay upon the settle in the kitchen, and she was still dressed. For a moment she could not decide where she was; then, hearing a sound from across the hall, she recalled the startling events of the night.

Instantly she stood up. She had intended, before drowsiness overcame her, to lock the bandit in, but sleep overpowered her, as sleep does the weary. Blinking to clear her vision, she walked slowly toward the spare-room.

The stranger still lay on the bed, quietly, and on his right side. His eyes were open, and

he tried to look round, but his shoulder was clearly too stiff and painful for him to move. She went to the far side of the bed where he could see her without turning. He had the look, not only of a wounded man, but of one utterly exhausted. For a moment he regarded her steadily, but without the gleam of intelligence; then he, too, began to blink rapidly as though to define the image before him.

‘Where am I?’ he asked in a faint whisper.

Virginia was startled; there was something vaguely familiar in his tone — did it resemble that of some one she knew? But that, too, was impossible!

‘You’re at McIntyre’s.’

‘McIntyre’s?’ He repeated the word as though it gave him some mysterious satisfaction.

‘What is your name?’

‘My name is Donald Barrie.’

Virginia looked at him suspiciously — that was a sort of moving-picture name; doubtless it was assumed.

‘Where did you come from?’

He lifted his hand in a vague motion, as though he tried to point. He groaned. 'I'm hurt!' Into his eye came a confused look, to Virginia a look of alarm and guilt. 'I was shot.'

'What were you doing to get shot?'

Virginia's tone was sharp and over the man's face passed a strange expression — could it be one of reproach? In an instant it was lost in a look of pure wretchedness and misery.

'What am I to do with you?' asked Virginia desperately.

The stranger closed his eyes. 'What am I to do with you?' he repeated thickly. 'What am I to do with you?'

Virginia had seen drunken men — more than once employees had had to be discharged for this fault. This was the thick way in which they spoke, and they, too, vaguely repeated remarks addressed to them. But the man carried with him no odor of liquor.

His eyes remained closed; they seemed to sink into his head. He had had no food for hours — no wonder he was weak! Virginia

fetches a cup of milk from the refrigerator, and with it a spoon. Dissatisfied with her slow service, the stranger tried to seize the cup and lift it to his lips. She held it sidewise and he succeeded in getting a deep draught.

‘More!’ he demanded loudly. ‘More! Quickly!’

Virginia gave a start. Last night she had raised two or three of the windows, and the sound of his voice could easily travel through the shutters which had fixed slats in the upper half. Moreover, light might show through the thin shade to one who was close at hand. She lowered the windows and turned out the electric light. The room was faintly illuminated by bars of sunshine which came in between the slats. With the windows closed the air began immediately to be intolerably close. She lifted one sash.

‘You must be very quiet!’ she said, returning to the bed.

The stranger made no further sound, nor looked as though he were likely ever to make a sound. She laid the clothing back from his shoulder — the inflammation was spreading,

in spite of bathing and the copious application of liniment.

'I can't let him die!' she thought distractedly. 'But if I call Dr. Oliver, he'll surely report him to the police. If I call' — a procession of relatives and friends passed before her eyes — 'If I call Uncle John he'll report him. And Uncle Henry! No doubt he'd rather die than be caught!' She shuddered profoundly — he might prefer this sort of death to another! 'I'll wait till noon,' she decided.

She heard a pounding at the kitchen door. Some one tried the latch, shaking it furiously. She was about to answer, but on second thought she ran up the steps to her bedroom and called out the window.

'What is it?'

'Are you in bed yet?' asked Foltz.

'Of course not!'

'I'm going to town. Do you want I should fetch anything back?'

'No, thank you.'

'I'll bring back the news,' promised Foltz. 'I expect they've caught him, worse luck for me! Don't you hear your 'phone ringing?'

‘Yes, I hear it.’

Virginia ran down the steps.

‘Wergie!’

‘Yes.’

‘Are your folks all right, Wergie?’

‘Yes.’

‘Is your Mom there?’

‘Not at this minute.’

‘You tell your Mom, Wergie, that you shall come and stay by me to-night. I can’t be alone. I fear me too much for this bandit.’

‘What did you say?’ asked Virginia.

‘Tell your Mom you shall stay by me to-night. I am afraid.’

‘I don’t know if I can, Mrs. Newhard.’

‘You can if you want to, Wergie. Two are every time safer than one. One could yell out the window while the other was caught.’

‘I’ll see,’ promised Virginia.

‘All right, you ’phone up.’

‘I will.’ Virginia hung up the receiver, though she knew that Mrs. Newhard had not reached the end of even her introductory remarks. The bell rang again, but she continued on her way across the room. She

measured coffee into the pot and added water — coffee! that would set her up! The pot boiled quickly and she carried a cup in to the stranger. He was awake; at least his eyes were wide open and very bright.

‘Where am I?’

‘You’re at McIntyre’s.’

‘McIntyre’s?’ Again the idea of McIntyre’s seemed to give him satisfaction. ‘That’s my own name — McIntyre.’

Virginia put a teaspoonful of coffee between his lips. He responded with a shudder.

‘What are you giving me?’ he asked roughly. ‘I want water.’

Virginia fetched a glass of water. He drank half of it, spilling the other half. ‘More!’ cried he. ‘Colder! Much more!’ His lips were parched, his face aflame. He drank half of another glass.

‘I can’t possibly wait till noon,’ thought Virginia. ‘He’s very, very sick. I must call Dr. Oliver. But I’ll first see what news Foltz brings.’

She stood looking stupidly about. She was afraid to leave her patient; she was afraid also

to stay in the kitchen, because with the door open Foltz would walk in, or, if it were locked, become suspicious. She was afraid to go into the garden because then she could not hear the sick man call. If Foltz entered the kitchen, or even came near, he would certainly hear the stranger's delirious mutterings. His voice was growing louder; when he asked for water he spoke in a shout.

She decided at last that until Foltz arrived she would go into the garden and pick currants — from there she could command the kitchen door, and any one coming to the house would see her in the garden and join her there. She took a large basket and went hatless into the hot sun. She had scarcely reached the currant bushes before Mrs. Foltz waddled down the path, a small child on each hand.

‘The kids are afraid to stay alone,’ she explained. ‘They think the bandit’ll get ’em. I tell ’em he sure will if they ain’t good. I come to borrow your colander. You stay here, I’ll get it.’

‘I’ll get it,’ insisted Virginia, terrified. ‘Mother changed things about in the kitchen

not long ago; they aren't in the same places. You pick currants for me.' She glanced toward the shuttered windows.

'I heard a queer sound,' said Mrs. Foltz. 'Like crying.'

'It's my dog,' explained Virginia quickly over her shoulder. 'A poor dog with a crushed foot. I'm curing it.' She hurried toward the house, talking meanwhile at the top of her voice. The dog was much better, he had ceased to whine — had Mrs. Foltz really heard a voice from the bedroom? She flew into the kitchen and out. 'Here's the colander!'

'You'd better let Foltz shoot that dog,' advised Mrs. Foltz. 'Next thing he'll go mad and bite you.'

'Oh, no!' laughed Virginia nervously.

Mrs. Foltz took up her waddling way toward home, her children clinging to her. Virginia watched them round the corner, then she ran into the spare-room. Seeing that her patient was lying quietly, she returned to the garden. She heard in a few minutes the sound of Foltz's car. He came running, waving a

paper — yesterday's paper, it was true, but none the less exciting. He had in addition fresh news — the constabulary had secured bloodhounds from Baltimore. Happily Officer Ferris was no worse. Foltz aimed an imaginary gun; he danced frantically about.

'If only I had one chance at him!' he shouted. 'If I'd 'a' gone in ten minutes earlier I might 'a' got a place as deputy. Some people have all the luck!'

The kitchen clock struck — it was already ten o'clock.

'Don't you have any work?' inquired Virginia sharply.

Foltz flushed red — there was plenty of work.

— 'I know my business better than any one else knows it,' he said impertinently.

Virginia went into the house, then back to the garden. Mrs. Foltz came to return the colander, thus exhibiting unusual promptness. 'Did Foltz tell you about the bloodhounds and all?' she asked.

'Yes, he did.'

Again Mrs. Foltz waddled home, and again Virginia went into the spare-room. The pa-

tient still lay quietly, whether in comfort or in a stupor she could not tell. At eleven o'clock she heard the sound of the postman's horn and, locking the kitchen door, ran down to the gate.

'He ain't caught, but they're on his track,' called the postman. 'They think he may have gone clear round the town and come out this way so as to get over to the hills. Better keep all the doors locked.'

Hearing a thundering rap on the back door, Virginia ran up the walk and through the house.

'Why do you keep your door locked?' asked Mrs. Foltz. 'I came for a fine strainer.'

'Did I lock the door?'

'I'll bet you're afraid!' laughed Mrs. Foltz.

'Here's the strainer.' Virginia handed it out and closed the door. Did Mrs. Foltz look at her suspiciously? There was not only a large reward for those who found this criminal, there was also a heavy penalty for those who sheltered criminals.

She crossed the hall to the spare-room. Noon was almost at hand; outside the air was

intensely warm; here it was cool enough, but heavy, almost unbreathable.

‘I must call the doctor!’ she said desperately. ‘I can’t put it off any longer.’

The stranger constantly moved his lips and pressed his right hand to his injured shoulder. Suddenly he opened his blue eyes wide and stared at Virginia.

‘Hello, Mother!’ said he distinctly.

Unsentimental and unromantic though she was, Virginia began to cry.

‘They shot me,’ he complained in a querulous tone. ‘Queer!’

‘No, not queer,’ said Virginia to herself.

She examined his wound once more; it was certainly not in the least improved. She brought him bread and milk. His cheeks were bright — perhaps it was not the flush of fever, but an indication of improvement. She tried to feed him bread and milk and he swallowed a little. If he would only get well by some swift magic and go away! If she might only come in and find the bed empty!

‘I’ll wait till evening,’ she decided. ‘Then I’ll have to tell somebody!’

In the middle of the afternoon came a ring of the telephone. It had rung many times, but she had not responded. This ring was long-continued and insistent. She expected to hear a familiar 'Wergie!' But it was not Mrs. Newhard, it was Mrs. McIntyre, speaking from McConnellsburg.

'Virginia!'

'Yes.'

'This is Mother. Your voice sounds strange.'

'I guess it's a poor connection.'

'If everything isn't all right, I can come home to-morrow. Aunt Susie's better.'

Virginia saw her mother's keen eyes, heard her mother's positive voice sternly condemning the evil-doer.

'Oh, don't come!' she cried. 'Why should you come?'

'You're sure you're all right?'

'Oh, yes, I'm all right.'

Mrs. McIntyre was thrifty, she hung up the receiver with a short 'Good-bye, then!'

Virginia clung to the hook of the telephone. The bell buzzed in her ear.

'Hello, McIntyre's?'

'Yes.'

'I have a telegram for Miss Virginia.'

'Yes?'

"Send Kincaid to Fairfield Station Friday. Father."

Kincaid! — she saw the blue eyes of the steady Scotchman. This was Tuesday — he was to arrive on Wednesday. He would know what to do!

She turned from the telephone — Foltz stood in the kitchen.

'I thought I heard a voice talking.'

'You did,' said Virginia promptly. 'You heard me.' She began to tremble — the door into the spare-room was closed, but the door from the kitchen into the hall was open! She walked toward the outer door, and Foltz, being in her path, was compelled to step backward.

'The reward's made yet bigger,' he announced. 'Five hundred to it yet. That makes fifteen hundred in all. Alive or dead. Better dead than alive, I'll say.'

'Why don't you go and hunt for him?' Vir-

ginia did not mean to speak loudly, but her voice cracked into shrillness.

'I would go in a posse,' said Foltz. 'But not alone. A fellow like that wouldn't let himself be taken alive, believe me! And he wouldn't care who he killed neither. You know them Lemur brothers? — they ——'

'I'm very busy,' interrupted Virginia. 'I'm making jelly.' The heaped basket of currants on the table bore out her statement. 'This is no time for any of us to stand and talk.'

Having locked the door behind Foltz, she put the currants on the stove. Exhausted she sat down in a deep rocking-chair, and instantly was asleep. After a long time, roused by the odor of burning, she sprang up — it was four o'clock!

She rescued the boiling juice; fortunately only that which ran over the sides of the kettle had burned. The odor was all-pervading.

'Nobody can smell A.B.C. now!' she said with a nervous laugh.

She put her jelly into the glasses and ate her supper. It was now six o'clock, now

seven, now eight. The telephone rang, it rang again, again. A part of the time she did not hear. The sick man grew more restless, moving his hands and feet. Foltz tried the door and went away, supposing her gone.

‘My name’s McIntyre,’ declared the stranger again. ‘McIntyre.’

‘You must be quiet,’ said Virginia. She said it over and over, at least twenty times.

She slept, she woke, and slept again. She heard the clock strike ten, eleven, twelve; she did not hear one or two. She dreamed, her head laid uncomfortably on the back of the chair, of Foltz in armed pursuit.

‘He must have a chance,’ she muttered. ‘A chance!’ and fell asleep once more.

CHAPTER VI

‘THIS IS NONE OF I!’

THE stranger lay flushed and still on the high bed, and Virginia stood pale and still beside him. It was Wednesday morning and dawn had come. The light which shone in through the high slats was no longer gray, but soft rose. The stranger moved his hands incessantly; Virginia believed that if it were not for his wound he would spring from bed. Frequently he tried to turn, but his shoulder seemed immovable. He would have nothing but water to drink, and would eat no solid food.

‘He’s weaker,’ said Virginia.

When the telephone rang, she turned and looked at it in angry confusion. Weariness and anxiety had weakened her power of invention.

‘I don’t like to tell lies,’ she muttered. ‘Perhaps I’ve told some already.’

She decided that she would not go to the

telephone, then she forgot her decision and walked thither. Her step was unsteady, and, reaching the wall, she leaned against it.

‘Wergie!’ said the voice of Mrs. Newhard, though it was not yet six o’clock. ‘Are you all right again?’

‘Yes,’ answered Virginia, puzzled. She remembered that she had told Mrs. Newhard she could not spend the night with her, but what excuse had she given?

‘I guess you worked too long in the sun. Tell your Mom she oughtn’t to work you so hard. Did you hear anysing?’

‘About what?’ Virginia was not pretending — at this moment she could remember nothing.

‘Why, about the robber!’ cried Mrs. Newhard. ‘About the bandit! Him what bombed the post-office! You sure didn’t forget, Wergie!’

‘I haven’t heard anything new.’

‘Wergie!’

Virginia made no answer.

‘Ach, she’s already gone!’ muttered Mrs. Newhard.

At seven o'clock the telephone rang again. Virginia had fed the patient a little bread and milk and given him a great deal of water and had herself consumed two cups of strong coffee. She felt revived and somewhat cheered; Kincaid might come at any moment, and to him she would resign all responsibility for her charge. She went to the telephone, feeling equal to answering any inquiry.

'That you, Virginia?' This was Nell's voice. 'How are you?'

'All right.'

'Did you know they think the bandit has come this way?'

'He has!'

'They're going to make a thorough search. They have a lot of extra men.'

'How are you getting along?' asked Virginia.

'That was what I meant to tell you. I believe the children are all taking the whooping-cough. Hear 'em?'

'I do.'

'It's supposed to be six weeks coming and six going. So-long!'

Virginia put in order the few matters in the house which were out of order; then she went to the door and looked up the road toward Gettysburg. When she came back she visited the spare-room. The shoulder of the patient required dressing; she went to the door again, hoping to see Kincaid. Having looked in vain, she returned to the four-post bed.

The man's wound appeared to her no better, but it also appeared no worse. The odor of the strong antiseptic made her feel ill, it filled the house and could, she was sure, be detected afar. She walked out to the porch; she would dress the dog's foot again — that would account for the odor if Foltz inquired. The dog was not on his bed of burlap — apparently he had recovered enough to seek his home. Returning to the kitchen, she burned sugar in a pan.

'Deceiving is beginning to come easy,' she muttered.

Ten times in the morning she walked to the front door, but saw no Kincaid. On the last journey she stopped by the table in the living-room and there she stood a long time. When

she looked again at the clock a half-hour had passed.

'Can it be that I'm sleeping on my feet?' she said.

She crossed the kitchen and regarded herself curiously in the mirror which hung between the two windows. She looked pale, haggard, aged. She began to cry, then she laughed feebly.

'Lawks a daisy, lawks a massy,
This is none of I!'

she quoted.

'What did you say?'

She looked round — Mrs. Foltz stood in the doorway.

'Talking to yourself?' she asked in a loud voice.

'I was reciting some poetry.'

'Aren't you getting any dinner?'

'Don't you smell dinner?'

'I smell burned sugar. I came for a good-sized dipper.'

Mrs. Foltz took the dipper and departed. Virginia continued her verses. Having con-

cluded her recitation, she turned to a more serious poet.

‘Oh, what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practice to deceive!’

Suddenly she jerked her head sharply to one side — the telephone bell was ringing loudly. It continued to buzz after she had lifted the receiver.

‘Virginia!’

‘Yes, Nell.’

‘They say the police are really coming this way, at least half a dozen, on motor-cycles. They’re combing the county. Perhaps they’ll search our houses and barns. Look out for them!’

‘Ting-a-ling!’ said the bell again.

‘Yes,’ said Virginia.

‘Wergie!’

‘Yes.’ Virginia spoke in a grim tone.

‘Do you know anysing for sure?’

‘Nothing for sure,’ replied Virginia truthfully.

‘Wergie!’

‘Yes, what is it?’

'Do you — do you —' Mrs. Newhard was manufacturing a question. 'Do you think it will give rain?'

Virginia laughed foolishly. Her father sometimes mischievously quoted his neighbors.

'Either that or throw a snow.'

'Why, Wergie! do you think ——'

Virginia hung up the receiver and stood for a moment where she was, alarmed at the blank in her mind; then, crossing the room, she lifted from the table one of the volumes which had come in the mail. At the end of ten minutes she had not read the title.

Again she lifted her head with a jerk. In the middle of the kitchen stood a man, forlorn, bearded, tottering, his clothes stained with blood. She gave a mighty start.

'Go back to bed!' she ordered wildly, walking toward him. 'Oh, please go back to bed!'

He obeyed her willingly enough.

'And stay there!' she commanded. 'Stay there!' She shook a threatening finger. 'If you know what's good for you, you'll stay

there, do you hear? The police will get you! They're coming!'

He staggered across the hall to the bed and, exhausted by his effort, lay pale as death.

'Got to get home,' he whispered hoarsely.

Virginia locked the doors. Though the police were at hand she must sleep — there was no other way. She set the alarm for six o'clock, and, placing a rocking-chair before the spare-room door, sat down, the clock in her lap. If Kincaid came he would make enough noise to wake her; if the constabulary came to search the house, they would be even more certain to wake her.

It was, however, the clock which woke her. She hushed its loud peal, then rose and bathed her face in cold water and made herself fresh coffee. She looked out the window — at the front gate two officers on motor-cycles stopped to talk to Foltz. Foltz shook his head. 'He's not in our barn!' he shouted and they passed on.

The stranger seemed to become slightly more conscious. He turned farther on his side, and Virginia's housewifely instincts sug-

gested that she make the bed neater. She ran upstairs and came down with sheets over her arm. In the doorway between the kitchen and the hall stood a man. She was about to call frantically, 'Go back to bed!' when her throat congealed. The man was not the sick man, but Foltz, and his sharp eyes were fixed upon the spare-room bed. Alarmed as she was, she was also amused — there was no doubt that Foltz looked a good deal like a weazel. With feet which seemed to drag, but which really traveled swiftly, she came to his side.

'What do you want?'

'I just came to ask if you saw the police down at the gate.'

'I did.' She looked past his shoulder — astonished she observed that the spare-room bed was empty, not only of its occupant, but of all its clothes above the lower sheet.

'I'm making up the bed,' she explained steadily. 'When Mother comes home, she's going to bring my Aunt Susie with her.'

Foltz backed into the kitchen.

'You have a fierce smell here!'

‘Haven’t I?’ Now that he was leaving, Virginia was able to speak almost gayly. ‘My poor dog’s gone. I’ve been trying to burn out the smell of liniment with sugar.’

‘The police are searching all the barns. I told ’em I’d searched here.’ Foltz stepped out to the porch.

When he had gone, Virginia stood paralyzed. ‘Did I unlock the door without knowing it?’ she asked. ‘Is he gone?’

Leaning on the edge of the table, she helped herself round to the other side. She tottered to the door and caught hold of the frame. The sheets on her arm opened and trailed round her feet. She crossed the hall. She had not been mistaken — the bed was empty. She walked round to the far side. The stranger had rolled to the edge — now, wound in sheets and coverlet he lay on the floor in the corner. Here the electric light did not shine; Virginia fetched a candle and looked down.

‘I can’t lift you back!’ she said frantically. ‘That’s certain!’

CHAPTER VII

AGAIN VIRGINIA FALLS ASLEEP

It was Thursday morning and the desperado still lay upon the floor. Beneath him were thickly folded quilts; between him and the door stood the four-post bed, now made up with pillows standing like sentinels, and a quilted coverlet which hung almost as low as the long valance. He made no further effort to rise, but in his dark corner either muttered or moaned continuously. His face was now deathly pale, his beard had grown still longer.

It was six o'clock in the morning, and Virginia stood looking down upon him. Then she knelt down, her motions lighted by a candle on the window-sill, and coaxed him to take a little bread and milk. She was encouraged when he feebly swallowed a few mouthfuls — that was a good sign. But a good sign was a bad sign — what would happen to him when he recovered? What possible chance had he of escape?

She had wearied her eyes in vain looking for Kincaid, but she went to the door and looked again. He might have come into Gettysburg in the evening and be on his way out now. She did not see Kincaid, but instead two of the constabulary speeding past on motor-cycles.

She stood by the kitchen table trying to pare potatoes; she walked into the spare-room and looked into the dark corner; she returned to the kitchen and stood idle. She heard again the whirr of motor-cycles and shuddered. She approached the stove and turned away. There was something she must attend to, but she could not remember what it was — ah! she must tell Foltz that if Kincaid did not come he must ride to Fairfield the next day to meet her father. Foltz would not wish to go; he was afraid of the tall horses.

A vague recollection of the night disturbed her. Believing that she heard footsteps outside the house, she had gone upstairs and gazed over the moonlit landscape. She could see one figure, then another, come through the gate and enter the barn. Was it Foltz and

his son, or were they officers? They vanished into the blackness of the doorway and did not reappear.

At nine o'clock she sought Foltz in the barn.

'Father expected Kincaid to be here yesterday, but he hasn't appeared. If he doesn't come to-morrow, you'll have to ride Luce and Lady to Fairfield Station to meet Father and the sheep.'

'I don't know if I will,' said Foltz impertinently. He looked sharply round as he spoke, first over one shoulder, then over the other. 'I have other business.'

'What other business have you?'

'If they start this rascal up in the woods and he runs this way, am I going to hand that fifteen hundred over to somebody else, say? I guess not! Why, he might be in the house!'

'In the house!' repeated Virginia. 'What nonsense!' She felt a queer sensation in her cheeks — was she flushing red or growing pale?

'Sure! In the house! He might be in anybody's house. Why not?'

Virginia turned away. 'That's foolish!'

Foltz unexpectedly stepped in front of her. 'What's the matter with you, Virginia? You look sick.'

'I'm not sick.' Virginia tried to speak coolly. 'What should make me sick?'

She kept on her way, though the house seemed to have moved from its foundations and to be still moving, farther and farther. She reached the porch at last, then the cool interior. The day was likely to be fearfully hot.

It was ten o'clock, eleven, twelve. The stranger lay more quietly. When she went to his side at one o'clock, he asked her the first intelligible question of many hours.

'Where am I?'

'You're at McIntyre's.'

'McIntyre's!' He uttered only the astonished and apparently pleased repetition of that single word.

Looking down upon him, Virginia became certain that he could not possibly get away — it would be many days before he would be able to go unless he were carried. Tears dropped from her eyes upon the bed. Still

crying, she sat down in the kitchen, her body and mind overcome by necessity for sleep.

'To-day they'll come,' said she aloud. She laid her head back upon her chair and before it settled to the least uncomfortable position her eyes closed. The clock struck one, then two. The sun, having passed the meridian, declined, and the east side of the house upon which the kitchen faced began to be shadowed.

The reverberation of the stroke of two had barely died away when the figure of a man carrying a gun filled the doorway. It was not a tall figure and, a little distorted, it had a warlike and evil look. If there had been any one awake, it would have been recognized in a moment as that of Foltz, but there was no one awake.

Foltz stood for a moment studying Virginia sleeping, then he took a step into the room, then another, until he stood inside. The door into the hall was closed, but the door into the living-room was open, and this was to be reached by walking behind Virginia's chair, in every way a desirable course.

As he passed so near her, Virginia quickly



THE FIGURE OF A MAN CARRYING A GUN FILLED THE
DOORWAY

lifted her head. To her dimmed vision the room seemed to be exactly the same as when she had closed her eyes, and so it was.

‘All right,’ said she in a sleepy voice. ‘It’s all right.’

Standing in the living-room, Foltz remained motionless for a long minute; then, as if Virginia’s remarks encouraged him, he stepped on. He peered behind a sofa placed across the corner of the room — there alone could any one be hidden. He stepped into the hall. He glanced toward the closed doors of the parlor and the spare-room — he would look into them as he came down. The attic was his goal; there he believed the miscreant lay.

Halfway up the steps he halted, startled almost out of his wits. But it was only the telephone bell. It rang again and yet again, but it did not wake Virginia. He tiptoed on. Once his gun touched the rail of the banister and again he stood perfectly still, until he was sure that the sound had not roused the sleeper. He carried the gun now as though he were a member of a firing squad and his victim stood before him.

Virginia had opened her eyes when the telephone rang and had promptly closed them. When Foltz stumbled, she opened them again, not because she heard the sound produced by his awkward motion, but because, somewhat refreshed and vaguely alarmed, she was slowly waking. When she did wake, it was not with a start, but with a gradually quickening consciousness that something was seriously wrong. She opened her eyes, closed them, and opened them again. Surely the steps creaked! Roused, and lifting her head, she listened. Foltz stood still — she slept again.

Having discovered no bandit in attic or bedrooms, Foltz descended to the first floor and opened the door of the parlor. By the time Virginia was again awake, he was again standing still. He found nothing in the parlor except furniture and a pleasant coolness. Tiptoeing down the hall, he opened the door into the spare-room. He walked in, his eyes accustomed to dim light. He gave a spring — here was something!

... 'Halt!' he roared. 'Halt!'

Now Virginia opened her eyes wide. Foltz stood in the doorway between the kitchen and the hall, his gun, held level with his shoulder, pointing toward the spare-room.

'Wergie!' he yelled — in moments of excitement his *v*'s, like those of Mrs. Newhard, became *w*'s. 'Wergie, I'm to get the fifteen hundred! If he runs I have a bead on him.'

Virginia still sat with her head against the back of the chair.

'You have?' she said, trying to coördinate her desperate thoughts.

'I have!' Foltz spoke now with a sort of joyful solemnity. 'Go quick to the 'phone, ring up the police, and tell them I'm the winner.'

Fully awake, Virginia lifted her head. She could see the armed figure of Foltz, she could see the open doors, she could hear a querulous muttering.

'What did you say?' she asked in a foolish effort to gain time.

'You're to ring the constabulary and tell them I have the fifteen hundred reward, and they're to come out here quick.'

Virginia laid back her head. 'I shall do nothing of the kind.'

'Do you think you'll get it?' shouted Foltz, 'when he's been hiding all the time under your nose and you never guessed it!' In his excitement he shifted his gun so that it pointed toward Virginia, but quickly shifted it back so that it covered the spare-room door. 'Do what I say, Wergie!'

Virginia's mind felt clear. 'You're going crazy, Foltz!'

Foltz took a step toward her, another — surely he was not going to lay hands upon her! He was moving past her to the living-room. He stood at the telephone, the muzzle of his gun projecting into the kitchen, and as he spoke he drew away from the mouthpiece and peered round the corner.

'Central!' he shouted. 'What time is it by you?'

Central obligingly gave him the time.

'Remember that's the hour when Foltz called you! Now give me the police.' He heard a click, another click, receivers were being lifted from their hooks. How smart he

had been to establish the exact hour with the exchange! 'Police? This is Foltz at McIntyre's farm. You get that? Well, you tell the world that I have the fifteen hundred. . . . Yes, I have him fast. You get out here quick. What? Half dead and half alive.'

He hung up the receiver and returned swiftly to his position at the kitchen door.

'He's sick. He lays back in the corner. He made himself a neat nest of covers. It looks as if he was first up on the attic. I guess he used some of the liniment. Come, stand by me and my gun and I'll let you look at him.'

'No,' said Virginia.

'Now's your chance! He can't do you anything. They'll take him off double-quick. He's sure a wild one!' In an access of bravery, Foltz stepped across the hall, and stood in the spare-room door, his gun aimed toward the corner.

Virginia sat in her chair with her hands clasped in her lap.

Foltz looked at her curiously. 'Are you sick?' he asked. 'You looked sick for a couple o' days.'

Virginia did not answer.

'Where am I?' came the faint voice from behind the bed.

'You'll find out pretty quick where you are!' Foltz roared in his deep bass. 'You lay still.'

Virginia rose at last and went to the door, her heart burning. 'Don't talk to him like that!' she said. 'You say he's helpless.'

'You never can tell if they're helpless or putting on,' answered Foltz, still in a roar. 'But it wouldn't do him no good to put on, not while Foltz has an eye on him.'

There was suddenly a loud confusion, the whirr of motor-cycles, the sound of voices, of running feet. Into the kitchen stepped an officer, uniformed in gray, behind him another, then another. Foltz stepped from the spare-room door to the kitchen door to meet them.

'Remember I get the reward!' he cried. 'I have plenty witnesses.'

'Get out of the way!' ordered one of the officers.

'I called the exchange and told her.' Foltz

intended to hold his ground until his point was proved. 'She knows what time it was.'

'This is a desperate criminal!' cried the captain of the squad, a tall and powerful man. 'While you're having afternoon tea, he'll get away!'

The captain seemed to step over Foltz. He carried a revolver in his hand and the three who followed him pulled revolvers from their holsters.

'Where is he?' asked one.

'Hands up!' ordered the captain. 'Where is he?' he asked Foltz angrily.

'Do I get the fifteen hundred?'

'If you deserve it. Where is he?'

'He's behind the bed.'

The captain entered the dim room. He had noted an electric fixture in the kitchen and, feeling for a button on the spare-room wall, he turned on the light. He saw a neat room, furnished with old-fashioned furniture, the chief piece of which was an enormous four-post bed with a valance which hung to the floor. He seized a post, another officer lent a

hand; with a single jerk, they pulled the bed into the center of the room.

'There he lays!' cried Foltz, getting his gun into position.

'Put that down!' ordered the captain's sharp voice. 'We'll look after him.' The voice changed. 'What! Dead, is he?'

The captain knelt on the floor beside the folded quilts. 'Get the shutters open, will you? Here's where the chief got him. A bad slanting wound — looks infected. How in the world did he get 'way out here?'

Virginia stood with her hand on the jamb of the kitchen door. She could hear brakes put suddenly on cars, other voices, many voices.

'Where were the people all the time he was hiding here?' asked an officer.

'McIntyre, he went to Pittsburgh for sheep, and the Missis, she's away too,' explained Foltz. 'There wasn't anybody here but a sort of simple-minded girl. I guess her cousin was here, but only at night. He could easily get in. They don't never sleep in this room.'

'Have you a truck we can use?' asked the captain.

'Sure,' said Foltz.

Virginia walked across the hall. Her patient lay in plain sight. His sunk eyes were closed, his face was marble, his black beard had grown to be an inch long. One by one the officers looked round at her.

'Don't you be afraid, Miss McIntyre,' said the captain kindly. 'We'll get him out of this in fifteen minutes.'

'You mean you'll take him away in the truck?'

'Sure! We'll put some straw in it.'

'Where will you take him?'

'Where he belongs.'

'You don't mean to jail?'

'To jail.'

'You ought to call a doctor,' wailed Virginia. 'He'll die!'

'Now, young lady' — the captain came to her side. 'You go upstairs and keep out of the way till this is over. People who rob and shoot can't expect to lie in soft beds.'

Virginia pressed her hands to either side of

her head. In the spare-room were four officers; others were in the hall and kitchen. She could see on the porch the vast form of Mrs. Foltz, a child on each hand. Mrs. Foltz was having a few sharp words with still another officer who barred her way.

‘I’ve got here such a dipper,’ she said. ‘It’s McIntyre’s dipper. They’re particular about their things. I must get in and hang it in its place.’

Virginia saw, beyond, another form, almost as large, but slightly more shapely. The sight was bewildering — how had Mrs. Newhard got herself here so quickly? Of course she had heard Foltz over the telephone! There was Mrs. Newhard’s son — he had doubtless been happy to bring her. She saw scores of others — neighbors from near and far, strangers whom she had never seen. She heard the voice of Mrs. Newhard. ‘Wergie! Wergie! It’s me, Wergie. I came at once to you!’

‘Clear this whole crowd away!’ ordered the captain roughly. ‘Get ’em out! You’ — he looked at Foltz — ‘hitch up your truck. You’

— he spoke to Virginia with only a little less sharpness — ‘you go upstairs, Miss McIntyre, as I told you, and stay there till we’re gone. Is there any one from out here you’d like to have with you?’

Mrs. Foltz succeeded in getting her foot over the sill. ‘I’m the one,’ she called. ‘I’m the near neighbor, I’m ——’

‘I’m here, Wergie!’ screamed Mrs. Newhard. ‘Wergie, it’s me!’

Cruelly the officer closed the door with a slam.

‘You can’t take that poor man away in a truck,’ wept Virginia.

‘We’re going to take him away in a truck, at once.’

‘Please let the doctor see him first!’

‘Young lady, we know our business.’

Moved by some strong pressure from without, the door opened. The officer on guard seized the entering person by the arm.

‘It would be murder!’ cried Virginia hysterically.

‘What would be murder?’ asked an outraged voice. ‘Take your hands off me! This

is my house. What in the name of sense is the matter?'

Satchel in hand, tall Mrs. McIntyre stood inside the door, her eyes snapping. The guard closed it behind her. She looked round her kitchen, she looked at Virginia, she looked at the constabulary, she looked at Foltz. She set down her satchel.

'In the name of sense!' she said again. 'I say once more, what is the matter?'

'I caught a safe-cracker,' announced Foltz, who had not moved to bring the truck.

'You caught a safe-cracker!' There was astonishment in Mrs. McIntyre's voice, there was also amusement. She put — it was undeniable — a slight emphasis on the 'you.' Vaguely the tragic situation was brightened.

'If you don't believe me, he's laying in there,' said Foltz angrily.

Mrs. McIntyre's bewildered eyes sought the captain's.

'The Gettysburg post-office was robbed,' he explained. 'One of the burglars was shot, and himself shot the chief. He made his way out here and has been hiding in your house.'

'Where was Will McIntyre?' demanded Mrs. McIntyre.

'He went for his sheep,' said Foltz.

'He went for his sheep!' repeated Mrs. McIntyre. 'That's a great note! Where's Virginia?'

Officers and civilians looked round. Like a house of cards collapsing under a mighty breath, Virginia sank upon a chair. She clasped her hands like a child. She was again a child in this strong and stern presence. But in the wisdom of this stern presence she had unlimited confidence.

'Mother!' said she hoarsely. 'Go look into the spare-room.'

Mrs. McIntyre walked across the room into the hall, into the spare-room. 'In the name of sense!' said she still again. 'Have you had a doctor?'

'No, madam!' The captain spoke angrily. 'We'll have the doctor just as soon as we get to Gettysburg. The sooner we can leave here, the sooner that will be.'

'To Gettysburg!' repeated Mrs. McIntyre. As she spoke she removed her hat. She still

used hatpins, and she stuck them viciously into the crown. 'To Gettysburg! Nonsense! Put him on that bed, and call Dr. Oliver; no, call Dr. Oliver before you lift him to the bed. Don't dispute with me! I'm old enough to be your mother. If you move him, his blood will be on your head!'

As if frightened by this Biblical threat, the officer ordered one of his subordinates to call the doctor. 'Then clear every living soul out of here, out of the house, out of the yard. Mrs. McIntyre, get your daughter upstairs.'

Obedying instantly, Mrs. McIntyre put her arm round Virginia and moved her toward the stairway.

CHAPTER VIII

FOLTZ TELLS HIS STORY

WITH creaking of brakes a long freight train came to a stop at the Fairfield Station. It was five o'clock in the afternoon and the bright sun was still high. A heavy shower at noon had cooled the air without doing any harm to growing crops. Near by were pleasant hills, upon whose dark verdure the human eye rested with pleasure, and to east and south and north lay a fertile plain. The station was a mile from the town, and beside the ticket office and freight house stood a bus, a small truck, several cars, and a wagon. Tied to a near-by fence were two tall sorrel horses, which nuzzled each other affectionately. When the train drew in, they pricked their ears, as sensitive creatures would, but showed otherwise no sign of disturbance.

In the center of a small group of men on the station platform stood Henry Foltz. He was talking very fast and loud and gesticulating

freely. Sometimes he laid his hand on his shoulder, sometimes he seemed to be pointing a gun. About him was an appearance of triumph, even a sort of exaltation.

As the train came to a halt, the engineer thrust his head out of the cab window, three train-hands in heavy blue overall suits swung themselves lightly down from various sections of the train, and from the caboose stepped William McIntyre. He moved stiffly and showed the effect of a night of partial wakefulness and a journey through a good deal of dust and smoke. His clear blue eyes retained their proper color, but his face was grimy and the reddish tint of his hair was dimmed.

At sight of him the group of men separated as if unwillingly, and Foltz came briskly toward him. The long train began at once to back to a siding beside which there was a platform the same height as the floor of the cars and with an inclined plane descending to a small lot enclosed by a fence. Above the loud grinding of the wheels and the puffing of the engine could be heard the bleating of many sheep.

'Hello, Foltz!' McIntyre saw the tethered horses. 'Where's Kincaid?'

'Didn't come,' answered Foltz. 'Never thought he was reliable.'

'Didn't he send any message?'

'Not a word.'

'That's queer!'

'Oh, I don't know!'

Foltz looked annoyed, his friends were approaching — probably they would spoil the effect of his story by interruptions. He had a sense of the dramatic and he had looked forward eagerly to telling McIntyre of the amazing events of his absence with himself as the hero.

Only the bus driver was attending to his business. Having shown two women passengers to seats, he also drew near. A voice followed him.

'Look here, Toohill, I'm in a hurry! I've got to get home.'

Toohill cast a sorrowful and regretful look toward the group nearing McIntyre, then he turned back toward the bus. As he approached it, his steps were quickened by a cheerful thought.

'I guess you ladies don't know the awful things that's been going on in our neighborhood!' he said.

'No,' answered the two women. 'What has been going on?'

Toohill stepped to the driver's seat. 'Well, leave me tell you!' said he.

Foltz looked angrily over his shoulder. He would stand no interruption. He was extremely nervous — to be on the verge of receiving a check for fifteen hundred dollars is a nerve-racking position. The very ease with which the prize had been won was disturbing.

'Have you told him?' asked the nearest of the approaching group.

'Not yet,' said Foltz.

'He told me my shepherd, Kincaid, isn't here, and that's enough bad news to hear at one time,' said McIntyre sharply. The train had come to a final halt. 'I want this stock out as soon as possible. We've got a good distance to go and sheep don't walk any too fast. You can get 'em right out into the road.'

He walked briskly away from the group and toward the fence where Luce and Lady were whinnying loudly. They would scarcely let him untie them, so eager were they to press their soft noses against his cheek. By the time he had mounted Luce, a flock of yearlings had burst from the car door into the pen, and the train had been shifted so that the next car was opposite the inclined plane. From this door came also crowding sheep, bleating their frantic pleasure in the sight of green grass in the pen. It was only a sight, for they were crowded too closely to eat. McIntyre sat his horse well; he was a fine sight as he waited for the unloading to be completed and the gate opened.

The first sheep poked out their noses, then trotted into the road, their black ears flapping horizontally. Those behind pressed them closely. The first out tried to go toward the west, but the horses standing side by side wheeled round nose to nose and barred their way.

McIntyre patted both fine heads. 'Good work, Luce!' said he. 'Good work, Lady!'

In a moment Foltz was alongside. He awkwardly mounted Lady, who moved restlessly under his excited hand and nervous knees.

‘Gently!’ said McIntyre. ‘Gently!’

McIntyre looked over the pleasant fields. It was interesting how a wide view, especially a view with which one was familiar, rested and pleased the eye. His spirits rose; he had enjoyed his journey and had bought fine stock at a fair price. Kincaid might have been delayed, but he would surely come.

‘Well, now, Foltz,’ said he. ‘What has happened?’

‘Enough, I tell you!’ Though Foltz had a sense of the dramatic, his technique was not cultivated, and he did not know how to begin. ‘In the first place, the Gettysburg post-office was entered the night after you left. Burglars got in and cut the door of the vault and then blew it up with nitro-glycerine.’

‘What! Did they get anything?’

‘Not a thing.’

‘Good!’ McIntyre spoke with cheerfulness, which was exasperating to Foltz’s naturally pessimistic soul.

‘But one of the fellows shot at the chief of police and hit him.’

‘Hurt him badly?’

‘No,’ confessed Foltz unwillingly. ‘And the chief of police shot at him and hit him.’

‘Kill him?’

‘No.’

‘That’s good too.’ McIntyre seemed to Foltz silly in his cheerfulness. ‘Perhaps he’ll repent. A good wound is like a good licking, it sometimes brings a man to himself.’

‘Well, he ain’t brought to himself, not he!’ said Foltz. ‘You ain’t heard the worst yet. He got away and he took to the woods and he came to the west and’ — Foltz could motivate no more — ‘he hid in your house, that’s what he did!’

‘What!’

‘As I say, he hid in your house.’

‘Where did he hide?’

‘Under the spare-room bed.’

‘How long was he there?’

‘From Monday till this morning.’

‘Who found him?’

'I found him.' Now, metaphorically speaking, Foltz hurled his bomb. 'I'm getting fifteen hundred dollars reward for finding him, that's what I'm getting!'

'You are!' McIntyre showed gratifying surprise, even amazement. 'Where was Miss Virginia?'

Foltz gave no titles. 'Wergie was right there. She never dreamed such a thing was going on, no more than the babe unborn. He could 'a' carried her off.'

McIntyre's voice sharpened and Luce gave a little spring.

'Where was Miss Helen?'

'She wasn't there, anyhow not all the time. Her sister's children is with her — sick.'

Involuntarily McIntyre quickened the speed of Luce, but had to slacken it again for fear of pressing the sheep.

'Tell me this again.'

Foltz willingly repeated his story.

'You don't mean that Miss Virginia was alone in the house with this wretch hiding there! Not at night!'

'Yes, she was — three nights anyhow. He

might 'a' been there yet if I hadn't routed him out.'

'Quiet! Steady!' McIntyre addressed himself as well as his horse. 'You telephoned to Mrs. McIntyre?'

'She came,' said Foltz. 'She's there, and she's got the burglar there. She wouldn't leave them take him where he belongs. She defied the police something fierce.'

'She's got the burglar there!' McIntyre's voice had a sort of groaning sound — it seemed to him that they had been riding for hours and had been making no progress. At the next turn they would see the farm at last. The sun was not yet down, but it was resting on the hills.

'Yes, she's got the burglar there,' insisted Foltz. 'She'd only let them move him from the floor to the bed. She's got him in the downstairs spare-room where he hid. He's very sick. He had cheek, I tell you! He made himself a nice nest on the floor, he fetched quilts from the attic, and he was round the barn and stole the Animals' Best Cure and poured it on himself. The whole bottle's

empty. That saved his life, the doctor says. That, and he cut the bullet out of himself.'

'What sort of looking man is he?'

'Fierce. Wild. You could believe he would rob and murder everything he saw.'

'How old is he? Young? Middle-aged?'

'That's hard to tell. Middle-aged, I'd say.'

The sheep climbed the last hill, their pace slackening and many of them uttering weary bleats. The horses stepped on, lifting their feet high, as though they were on parade. At last they, too, reached the top of the hill.

'See the people!' cried Foltz in triumph.

'See the cars! Now do you believe me?'

'Oh, I believe you!' answered McIntyre.

'You told your boy to have the gates open?'

'Of course,' answered Foltz as though to soothe his master's excitement.

McIntyre was not quieted. Uttering a sharp 'Go on, Luce!' he rode round the sheep with Foltz following close behind.

CHAPTER IX

MCINTYRE READS HIS MAIL

VIRGINIA MCINTYRE lay in bed, not her own bed over the spare-room, but her mother's at the opposite corner of the house. By raising herself she could look out and see the gate, with two uniformed men lounging about and a long line of automobiles belonging to people who came excited with curiosity and went away excited with anger because they were not allowed to enter the yard. By looking to the west she could see other automobiles, and the road gently ascending to the rim of the hills.

She had been in bed for about twenty-four hours, but she had not been looking to either east or west. She had heard vague sounds — men's voices raised sharply, then a woman's voice speaking with decision. 'I want absolute quiet in this house, instantly!' At that she smiled and settled her head deeper into the pillow, in her spirit a sense of security and repose.

Dr. Oliver had stood by her bed with her mother and she had heard a few sentences.

'She's all right,' said he. 'Let her sleep all day.'

'Do you think he'll live?' asked Mrs. McIntyre as they went out together.

'I'm afraid so.'

It was comforting to know that some one was going to live, queerly as the doctor seemed to feel about it. After a long time Virginia had tried to make out the identity of a person sitting by the window.

'Who is that?' she asked at last.

A stout figure rose, not a stout, elderly figure, but a stout, active young figure.

'Nell?'

'Yes, you rascal,' said Nell. 'Want anything?'

'A drink.'

Nell brought a glass of cold water.

'Has Dad come home?'

'Not yet. Better go to sleep again, then you'll be ready to see him when he comes.'

It was six o'clock now, and Virginia was wide awake and fully aware of all that had

happened. The deep and subdued voices of men were to be heard below stairs — then the poor fugitive was still in the house! There were odors — odors of cooking which were vague and not unpleasant, and others which she could not identify, medical and antiseptic, with suggestions of healing, and far more delicate than the powerful aroma of A.B.C.

She sat up. She felt weak, but she was sure that she could rise and dress, and bed was no place for one who could be about. She lifted her hand to her face — tears were running from her eyes. She wiped them away, they flowed again.

She put her feet to the floor and stood up — she was able to stand! She looked round for her clothing and, failing to see anything which belonged to her, crossed the room and opened the closet door. There, fortunately, hung the clothes which she had last worn. She put on her shoes and her stockings, and again tried standing. She was a little tremulous, but by taking hold of the furniture she could walk to the window. She could see on the rim of the hill a cloud of dust. She clasped her hands,

the cloud approached, from it came familiar sounds. A brown mass filled the road, moving forward. It was dotted with short horizontal lines of black, six hundred flapping ears. She saw two tall objects behind the sheep — McIntyre and Foltz on Luce and Lady.

‘He’s here!’ she said. ‘He’s here!’ She sat down on a chair to wait. ‘If I go down before he comes, she’ll drive me back,’ said she with a smile.

Foltz’s boy walked up the road. He waved his arms, the brown mass turned into a field and divided into three hundred portions. The riders trotted on swiftly, their outlines, now that they had passed through the cloud of dust, became plain. They rode into the barnyard, and McIntyre sprang down and strode toward the house.

Virginia went slowly down the stairs. The doors were closed into all the rooms. She stood listening — from the parlor and spare-room came no sound; in the kitchen there was the murmur of voices. She turned the knob of the living-room door — through the window she could see coming round the house an

officer and two men in civilian clothes. She looked toward the gate — there waited, not a truck, but an ambulance. She recognized one of the civilian newcomers as the sheriff.

She moved slowly, and the men entered the kitchen before she had stepped out of the hall. Mrs. McIntyre was speaking to the newcomers.

‘I was at my sister’s over at McConnellsburg,’ she explained. ‘She has been very ill.’

‘Was your daughter alone in the house?’ asked the sheriff.

There was a sob in Mrs. McIntyre’s voice. ‘It was the most unfortunate thing. I had to go to my sister, there was no one else. After I’d started, McIntyre got a telegram that he must come to Greene County for his sheep. Virginia called her cousin, but her cousin’s nieces and nephews were with her and all had whooping-cough, so Virginia didn’t say she was alone. The Foltzes were near at hand and I suppose she thought she acted for the best. She’s young, she hasn’t had any experience.’

Unseen, and her presence unsuspected, Vir-

ginia pressed her hand to her lips to quell an hysterical impulse; nevertheless, she uttered a queer chuckle. Several persons turned their heads nervously, but no one stepped back to look into the living-room.

'When did you say the post-office was robbed?' This was the voice of McIntyre.

'On Sunday night.'

'And when did this man come here?'

'That's the dreadful thing,' answered Mrs. McIntyre. 'Nobody knows. This poor child alone, with a murderer in the next room!'

'Not quite a murderer,' corrected McIntyre.

'A robber, then!'

'I understand he's still over there.' McIntyre stepped across the kitchen and into the hall. He came back in an instant, walking swiftly.

'That's no murderer or robber!' he declared sharply.

Foltz strode forward into the center of the room.

'If ever there was a murderer or robber, that is one!' he said in a loud voice. 'You

would pick him out in a crowd as a murderer and robber and worse.'

'Not so loud, Foltz,' said Mrs. McIntyre. Hero though Foltz was, he seemed to find small favor in her eyes.

Virginia stepped into the kitchen. In spite of the presence of so many strangers, she forgot her shyness.

'He didn't act like a robber or a murderer,' she said. 'He was very gentle.'

With one accord all turned their heads.

'Virginia, go back to bed!' commanded Mrs. McIntyre.

McIntyre crossed the room. 'Sit down, my dear,' said he. He looked at Virginia with half-closed, intent eyes. On her face was an expression of exhaustion and shock too deep to have been produced by the mere discovery of the fugitive by Foltz. 'When did this man come here?'

'On Monday evening.'

'What!' cried Mrs. McIntyre.

'Had you heard about the robbery, Virginia?' went on McIntyre. 'Now, Mother, let me talk to her.'

'Yes. The postman told me first. Everybody knew about it.'

'Did you think this man was the robber?'

'I did.' Again the tears rolled down Virginia's cheeks. 'I couldn't help it. He came to the kitchen door and fell in flat on his face. He was helpless. I pitied him.' Virginia's voice grew defiant. 'You would have pitied him. There was a poor dog here at the same time with a crushed foot. I tried to help them both.'

'Did the man talk intelligibly at any time?'

'No.'

'Did he give his name?'

'Sometimes he said his name was Donald Barrie, sometimes he said it was McIntyre.'

'The doctor tells me he cut the bullet out himself,' said the sheriff.

'He didn't,' said Virginia quickly. 'I cut it out.'

There was a heavy thud as of a falling body. Virginia gave a little scream. But no one had fallen; it was only Mrs. McIntyre dropping into a chair.

McIntyre looked at her anxiously, but his anxious look changed to a smile. 'Steady, Mother!' said he. 'You cut out the bullet, did you, Virginia? With what?'

'With the butcher knife,' said Virginia steadily. 'Like you cut the bullet from under the skin of the sheep. It was easy; it sort of jumped out.'

The sheriff looked at the officers, they looked intently back.

'Where is the bullet?' asked a voice.

Virginia frowned. 'I think it flew under the bed.'

An officer stepped across the hall. The room was very quiet except for a remark of the sheriff. He meant to whisper, but he was a large and powerful man and it was difficult to whisper. 'That would settle it,' said he.

Mrs. McIntyre sat wiping away tears; men shifted uneasily from one foot to the other. Foltz stepped toward the door so that he could look into the spare-room.

'Why, that isn't the burglar!' he cried shrilly.

'Yes, it is,' said an officer. 'Only he's cleaned up.'

An officer crept out from under the high bed, a small object in his hand. He walked directly toward McIntyre and displayed it in his palm.

'That never came from the chief's gun!' he declared.

McIntyre bent his head over the outspread palm. He took the bullet into his hand.

'Foltz!' said he sharply.

Foltz moved uneasily toward the outer door, but a uniformed figure interposed.

'Foltz,' said McIntyre, more loudly. 'Have you been shooting?'

Foltz looked wildly about. Had he been shooting — he tried to think. Did anybody see him shoot?

'He was shooting on Sunday,' said Virginia. 'He had his gun and he wanted to kill my poor dog and I wouldn't let him. Later I heard a shot toward the woods.'

'What did you shoot at, Foltz?'

'I shot into the bushes at a dog.'

'Did you kill him?'

'I must have hit him.'

'You're sure it was a dog?' asked McIntyre gravely and sternly. He took a step toward Foltz and Foltz, backing, found an officer's hand on his wrist.

'If it's the bank robber, what matter who shot him?' he demanded furiously. 'It was by my luck that I shot him. And I tracked him down and found him under the bed. You can't take the reward from me. Let me go!'

The hand would not be shaken off.

'Hush!' cried Mrs. McIntyre. 'The doors are open.'

• Virginia looked across the hall. Low on the pillows lay a sleeping figure.

'That isn't the man!' she declared. 'He was middle-aged. That's a boy!'

'Same chap, Miss,' said an officer. 'He's been shaved and cleaned up.'

Now it was Virginia's turn to stand open-mouthed. She did not blush; Virginia dreamed no foolish, unfounded romances. In another moment she forgot herself entirely.

'Where are my letters?' asked McIntyre.

'On your desk.'

McIntyre took a long step into the living-room, another to his desk. He returned with a hastily torn envelope in his hand. He looked from one to the other of the large company as though he were stricken dumb.

'What is it?' demanded Mrs. McIntyre, as one who could endure no more.

'This is James Kincaid's nephew, Donald Barrie, come to tend my sheep!' gasped McIntyre. 'He walked in from Greene County. Take the ambulance back. He'll stay right where he is.'

'Then where's the bank robber?' shouted Foltz.

'Not here,' said the sheriff.

'Do I lose my fifteen hundred?' cried Foltz, still more wildly.

'You certainly do,' said the sheriff. 'You may lose more than that. You come to town and tell the Squire just when you shot and where.'

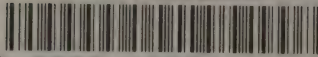
Mrs. McIntyre looked round the room. Her eyes fell last of all upon her daughter. Virginia caught her eye. She grinned like a boy.

‘Say it, Mother!’

‘In the name of sense!’ said Mrs. McIntyre. ‘And I thought you’d have a pleasant, quiet time!’

THE END

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